An Acte for the maintenance of the Peere and Cobbe of Lyme Regis, in the Countie of Dorset.

Whereas the Maior and Burgesses of the Borough and Towne of Lyme Regis in the Countie of Dorset, and other the Inhabitants of the said Towne and Borough, be at importable charges of themselues in the yerely maintenance & defence as well of the sayd Towne and Borough bordering vpon ỹ maine Sea, as also of the Peere of Lyme Regis aforesayd, commonly called the Cobbe, beyng a harbour for ships made & enforced in the maine Sea in the bottome of the great Baye, which extendeth from the Isle of Portland, to the hauen of Dartmouth, beyng distant xlii. miles: By meanes of which harbour, as wel ỹ ships of the subiects of this Realme as others (which in passing the narow Seas are many tymes by forcible Southerly windes caried into the sayd Baye) obtaine refuge and safegard in the said Peere, without the which they must of necessitie perish: And where the sayde Peere is a great releefe as wel to the sayd Inhabitants, as also to the countrey there adioyning thereby, receiuyng many benefites by reason of the traffique and entercourse of shipping there vsed: And where also the same Peere or Cobbe in tymes past was partly maintayned by reason of a certaine yeerely rent of xx. li. which was payd vnto the predecessours of the sayd Mayor & Burgesses by the Kings and Queenes of this Realme, to continue for certayne yeeres now determined, which yeerely rent of late tyme hath bene, and is withdrawen and forborne to bee paied, and also the same was partly maintayned by the good deuotion and charges of diuers wealthy Merchants heretofore inhabiting in the sayd Towne, whereof some are deceased, and some decayed, and sometyme by collections of the deuotion of the country thereaboutes, and partly the same Peere also was and is repaired and maintained by reason of certaine auncient Cobbe duties time out of memory of man vsed to be paid to the said Maior and Burgesses, of, and for all and all maner of wares and merchandizes brought into the said Peere, or caried out of the same, that is to say, for euery packe of woollen cloth ii.d. for euery fardell of linnen cloth, ii.d. for euery tunne of sweete wines, oyles and sackes, viii.d. for al maner of other wines, and al other grosse wares, iiii.d. the tunne, for ỹ killage of euery shippe, vessel or cockboate, iiii.d. for euery tunne of merchandize trouable and weighed at the Quenes beame there, ii.d. for the vse of the sayd beame: all which duties the said Maior and Burgesses, and their predecessors, haue had, vsed, and enioyed, by the time whereof the memory of man is not to the contrary, as by diuers grantes and confirmations made by the Kings of this Realme to the said Maior & Burgesses may appeare, which said duties be so small, considering the former helpes for maintenaunce as aforesayd, doe now cease, and that a great part of the old works beyng set with piles of great Okes, are not yet throughly defenced & repaired or finished, and the same old workes so eaten with wormes called Artes through oldnesse, that it falleth daily in great decay, and the new works which haue bene in building these xx. yeres, doe like wise fall into great decay euery great storme, which requireth a continual attendance euery tide to amend the faults thereof. And besides that, the sayd Maior and Burgesses are driuen to a further charge now then before time, by reason that they are now enforced to fetch their rocks with carkes two miles further in the sea, then heretofore they haue done. And moreouer, all other things needful are at a higher price then in former times they haue bene, so that by reason of the premisses, without speedie redresse & further helpe to be had and prouided for the maintenance of the said Peere or Cobbe, the same must needs fall to vtter ruine and decay (as ỹ like did happen in K. Edward the thirds time, whereby the said king did lose a great part of the said Towne by fretting of the sea) and many of the subiects of this Realme & others that shal happen there to bee imbayed by tempestuous weather, must needes perish for lacke of a conuenient place of harbour & refuge. And like wise, the country thereabouts wil be depriued of many commodities which they were wont to receiue, but also the said Towne & Inhabitants thereof, which for the most part liue by shipping & traffique together with their families, and diuers fit, able and skilful men and mariners there trained and brought vp fit for seruice, wil be vtterly impouerished for euer. In consideration whereof, and for that the sayd Maior & Burgesses haue of long time & yet do keepe within the sayd Towne a platforme furnished with great Ordinance, and with pouder and shot at their owne costes and charges for the defence of the enemie: And for that the said auncient duties and customes before mentioned were neuer heretofore sufficient to support the charges of the sayd Peere, but now much more insufficient for the causes aboue remembred: Be it therefore enacted by the Queenes most excellent maiestie, with the assent of the Lordes Spiritual & Temporall, and the Commons of this present Parliament assembled, and by the authoritie of the same, that the said Cobbe dueties and customes may from henceforth be increased in maner and forme following. That is to say, that it shal and may be lawfull to and for the sayd Maior & Burgesses and their successors, to haue and take, of, and for all and all maner of wares and merchandizes which after the feast of Pentecost now next comming, shalbe brought into the sayd Peere, Cobbe, or Towne of Lyme Regis, or caried out of the same, & there shalbe laded, landed, or vnladen inwards or outwards, for euery packe of woollen cloth, iii. d. only, for euery fardel of linnen cloth, iii.d. onely, for euery tunne of sweete wines, oiles and sackes, viii.d. onely, & for euery tunne of other wines, or other grosse wares (fish excepted) vi.d. onely, for the killage of euery ship, vessel, or cockboate, vi.d. onely, for euery tunne of merchandize trouable iiii.d. onely and no more. And that it may be further enacted & established by the authoritie aforesayd, that if any master of ship, merchãt, owner, factour or dealer with any the said wares, merchandizes or other things aforesaid, shall or will hereafter refuse or deny to pay the said Cobbe duties last aboue mentioned, or any of them vpon demaund, that then it shal and may be lawfull to and for the said Maior & Burgesses, & their successors, by any one of themselues, or any of their officers for ỹ time being within ỹ said Town, Peere or Cobbe, to attach & seaze the wares, merchandizes, & things for the which any such duetie as aforesaid shalbe due and vnpaid, or any other of the goods of the owner or owners of the said wares, merchandizes, or things there, & the same to retayne and keepe in the name of a distresse, vntil the same duties shalbe vnto the said Maior & Burgesses, or to their successors, or to their officer or officers in ỹ behalfe for the time beyng satisfied and paid, for, and toward the maintenance & continuance of the sayd Peere or Cobbe. And for the better & true execution of the true intent & meaning of this present acte, Be it further enacted by the authoritie aforesaid, that from henceforth, two sufficient persons of the Inhabitants of the same Towne, shalbe yerely chosen and appointed by the Maior there for the time being, for the true collection & emploiment of the duties aforesaid, which Receiuers shall openly in the Leete & Lawday there holden yerely, next after the feast of S. Michael the Archangel, make, yeeld, & deliuer vp in writing a perfect account vpon their othes, vnto the Maior of the same towne for the time being of their said receipts and emploiments. Prouided alwayes, that such as now are, or hereafter shalbe of the Cinque portes, & of all other hauen townes or Creekes within this realme, which of right had & enioyed heretofore priuiledge in those duties by vertue of any their Charters whatsoeuer, shalbe & continue discharged as heretofore they haue done, any thing in this acte contained to the cõtrary notwithstanding.

Prouided also & be it further enacted by the authoritie aforesaid, ỹ al such Cobbe duties & customes as shalbe gathered, receiued, or taken by vertue of this Acte or otherwise, shalbe imploied & bestowed in & vpon the said Peere or Cobbe, & the sea workes and other things thereunto appertaining, & not otherwise. And ỹ yerely at the quarter sessions of the Peace to be holden next before ỹ feast of S. Michael the Archangel, in the said Countie of Dorset, the Justices of Peace of the said Countie which shalbe there present, or the more part of them, shal in the said open sessions there, choose & appoint one Justice of Peace of the said Countie not being a free man of the same towne of Lyme. And also the merchants & inhabitants of Taunton in the Countie of Somerset, shall yerely choose one merchant of Taunton, & also the merchants & inhabitants of Chard in the said Countie of Somerset, shal yerely choose one merchant of Chard, which Justice of Peace, merchant of Taunton, & merchant of Chard so yerely to be chosen & appointed, together wth the Maior or lied officer of the same towne of Lyme for the time being, or the more part of thẽ, shall haue full power & authoritie yerely in the said Leete & Lawday, to take the iust & true account of the said Collectors & Receiuers vpon their othes of the sayd Cobbe duties & customes, what hath bene collected & receiued, & how it hath bene imploied, & what remayneth, and the same remaine to be imployed & bestowed as aforesaid. And if the said Collectors & Receiuers or any of them shall refuse to make account as aforesaid, that then he or they so refusing to make account as aforesaid, shal forfeite xl. li. of lawful mony of England, the same forfaitures to be recouered by the Maior of the said towne of Lyme, the said Justice of Peace, merchant of Tauntõ, merchant of Charde so to be chosen as aforesaid for the time beyng, or by any two of them by action of debt in any of the Queenes maiesties courtes of Record, wherin no wager of law, essoigne or protection shalbe allowed, & the same to be imployed & bestowed in & vpon the maintenance of the said Peere or Cobbe & other sea works & things aforesaid thereunto appertaining. This Acte to continue for ỹ space of v. yeres next ensuing, & from thence vntil the end of the next session of the nert parliament then nert ensuing. And also that after the end of the said session of parliament nert after the end of the said v. yeeres, the foresaid auncient Cobbe duties & customes, shal remaine due & payable vnto ỹ said Maior & Burgesses of ỹ said Borough & towne of Lyme Regis for euer, as ỹ same were due & payable vnto the said Maior & Burgesses before the making of this Acte, and shalbe vsed, ordered, & accounted, as it hath bene accustomed before ỹ making of this Acte: Any thing herein conteined to ỹ contrary thereof notwithstanding.

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